

AccessArt Response to the Curriculum & Assessment Review and to the Government Response to that Review

On November 5th 2025, the Curriculum and Assessment Review Team, headed by Professor Becky Francis CBE, published their final report, [Building a World Class Curriculum for All](#).

The government published [their response](#) to this review.

As a Subject Association for Art, and a Visual Arts Education Charity, this post shares AccessArt's initial response from an art, craft and design subject perspective.

Key Successes Within the Curriculum and Assessment Review (CaAR):

The EBacc has been removed. Introduced in 2010 by the Coalition Government to measure school performance based on a student's GCSE results in the core subjects. The Review has listened and recognised that the EBacc results in fewer pupils taking arts subjects.

- Progress 8 will be reformed to include equal weighting for arts, languages, and humanities. Progress 8 is a school performance measure that shows how much progress pupils have made from the end of primary school (Key Stage 2) to the end of secondary school (GCSEs).

During the CaAR process, the review team remained certain that Art, Craft and Design as a subject was doing well – a viewpoint contended by many subject experts. The CaAR therefore makes the following recommendations:

“We recommend that the Government:

- *Makes limited revisions to the Key Stage 1 to 3 Art and Design Programmes of Study to clarify and exemplify the knowledge and skills pupils should develop, including through their own creative practice, reflection and critical engagement.*
- *Works with Ofqual and awarding organisations to clarify the volume and range of coursework students are expected to produce for GCSE Art and Design.”* (pp 55 & 56 [CaAR](#))

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Encouragingly, the [government's response](#) to the CaAR goes much further, and AccessArt is grateful for the explicit messaging within their response. In particular, we celebrate:

- *“Improve arts education – we will revitalise arts education as part of the reformed national curriculum and through high-quality support for teachers of these subjects.” (p9, second bullet point of the Executive Summary)*
- *“The curriculum should be enriching in every single subject, including the arts subjects which are a fundamental part of the rich and broad education. The arts subjects are an entitlement rather than an optional extra and are disciplines in their own right, with unique pedagogies that the best schools teach with expertise and rigour. For example, the study of creative subjects can allow pupils to harness the process of creative endeavour, generating original works, fluency of communication and teamwork. Under this government, access to a high-quality arts education will not be the preserve of the 15 privileged few, but the entitlement of every child. That , is why we are committing to revitalise arts education as part of the reformed national curriculum and through high-quality support for teachers of these subjects.” (p14)*

It is a huge win that the language the government uses around the arts indicates that, at long last,

they are beginning to understand the arts as unique subjects, with unique demands and which bring very particular and powerful values to society.

Additionally:

- “The response commits to ensuring that the new programmes of study have the right level of specificity to support effective sequencing, including for foundation subjects.”*
- That “Arts & Culture” are one of five core enrichment areas. (p40)*

Opportunities yet to be Developed

There are several additional areas that AccessArt views as opportunities; however, these either currently lack the necessary detail to provide reassurance that they will have the intended impact or have been omitted from the documents altogether.

The Purpose of Art, Craft and Design Education

Whilst the government’s response does acknowledge the need for a rich curriculum with the arts at its centre, it would have been positive to see a statement in the CaAR or the government response that explicitly recognises the value a rich arts education brings to the whole child – and the

benefits to individuals and to future society of learning *through* the arts as well as *about* the arts.

PE receives rightful acknowledgment of the personal and social benefits of the subjects:

“Redrafts the purpose of study for PE, retaining the importance of competitive sports, but clarifying the significance of providing all pupils with opportunities to learn in a physical environment and emphasising its physical, social, cognitive and emotional benefits that complement and enhance overall academic performance and general wellbeing.”

The [CLA Capabilities Framework](#) makes it clear the benefits of a rich expressive arts education for all, and the DfE are keen to encourage Curriculum Coherence across subjects, developing skills like oracy. A single sentence recognising the ways art, craft and design as a subject contribute to a holistic education would be welcomed. Whilst this is recognised within Enrichment Entitlement, it is also important that these qualities, values and capabilities are recognised within the curriculum subject itself.

Enrichment Entitlement

AccessArt, of course, welcomes the inclusion of art and culture within the Enrichment Entitlement for all pupils; however, we await further details on how this will be implemented. In particular, we

caution against the loss of any statutory entitlement within the subject area itself. We are also interested in seeing what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that *all* pupils receive the same high-quality enrichment offer.

National Centre for Arts and Music Education

The proposed National Centre for Arts and Music Education was announced earlier this year. As there appeared to be no consultation before its announcement, the [CLA undertook their own consultation which can be found here](#). There is still no real detail on what the centre is to be, or how it is to be funded. Whilst we welcome the Centre in principle, we await the detail before we comment.

Progress 8

We welcome the idea that the creative subjects are to be placed on equal footing with languages and humanities, and we understand that further consultation is underway to inform the exact format of the “buckets”. However, we are concerned that schools will carry forward the legacy attitude that the arts are not to be valued as much as other subjects, and we look to the government for messaging to counteract this. We are also concerned that if there is an uptake in Art GCSE, we will not have the specialist teachers to meet the need in many schools due to previous declines (see below).

Art as a Unique Subject: Assessment

Whilst Ofsted and the government response to the Review both recognise that art is a unique subject with unique qualities and requirements, neither the government response nor the CaAR itself makes it clear what these unique qualities are. In turn, many SLTs do not understand these either, and we see many teachers struggle being asked to apply similar metrics and processes to art as are applied to other subjects. We believe there is a very real danger that with increased and continued testing at Primary and KS3, SLT and teachers will fail to understand that a) they do not need to apply the same metrics and processes to art as other subjects, and b) that any kind of assessment in art can have the unintentional impact of stifling creativity and exploration.

Instead, AccessArt would like to see it stated explicitly that it may not be in the pupils (or schools) best interests to attempt to assess art in similar ways to other subjects. Such a statement would in effect give schools permission to educate themselves on more appropriate ways to assess art, and therefore avoid a situation created through misunderstanding of the subject area which risks damaging pupils' relationship with their own creativity.

Art as a Unique Subject: Knowledge and Sequencing

Likewise, it is important that schools are clear

on the unique forms of knowledge within art, craft and design, and crucially, how pupils accumulate, embody and demonstrate this knowledge. CLA have written an article on the [types of knowledge in art here](#).

And again, whilst the reviews talk about Curriculum Coherence, it is worth adding here that coherence and sequencing might look very different in expressive arts subjects to other subjects, and that those differences are profound. An example of this would be where purposeful “dissonance” could play a vital part in enabling creativity in art lessons, as a counterbalance to “coherence”.

Clear messaging from government would show it understands and is ready to promote these differences of approach, to the benefit of the subject.

Curriculum Change

If we are to see effective curriculum change as a result of the CaAR, even with the modest changes the CaAR recommends to art, craft and design, we do need to acknowledge:

- *Initial Teacher training and CPD* – In 2024/25, the government funded 680 Initial Teacher Training (ITT) bursaries awarded for Art and Design. [Future bursaries have now been withdrawn](#). There is already a [shortage in specialist art teachers](#). We have yet to hear how CPD will be funded (and how it will

be provided) for teachers to enable them to reskill.

- *Budgets for Materials and Resources* – Earlier this year, we surveyed [school budgets for art materials](#). Without budgets being addressed, schools will continue to find it hard or even impossible to resource a curriculum.
- *Oak* – Frequent mention of Oak National Curriculum resources is made in both the CaAR and in the government's response to the review:

“Bodies such as Oak National Academy may be able to support teachers in this area by providing teachers with resources, progression scaffolds and exemplification of good practice.” (p53 CaAR)

“In addition, we note that this ambition could be supported in a number of additional ways, such as exemplification resources (such as those produced by Oak National Academy) and encouraging publishers and exam boards to continue to offer a wide selection of texts and accompanying materials.” (p78 [CaAR](#))

“Such practice might be bolstered through exemplification resources, such as those published by Oak National Academy.” (p86 [CaAR](#))

It is clear that the government considers Oak has a role to play in delivering any redeveloped curriculum. As an organisation that turned down

the opportunity to create resources for Oak, AccessArt raises the following points:

- Although Oak is branded as an “arm’s length body” AccessArt feels it is perhaps too easy for the government to reach for Oak resources as a solution to the curriculum. We would argue that this risks negating the vast and extensive expertise outside Oak, provided by Subject Associations such as AccessArt.
- Oak has yet to deliver on its original intention of signposting external content providers, thereby acting as a barrier to a fair and open playing field amongst suppliers. This point is supported by BESA. [The Judicial Review proceedings brought by co-claimants the British Educational Suppliers Association, the Publishers Association, and the Society of Authors relating to the Department for Education’s operating model for the arm’s length body Oak National Academy will resume from today \[30 September 2025\].](#)
- We express concern about the Oak AI tool which teachers are encouraged to use. Whilst the content it delivers may look worthy, it takes an educated or knowledgeable human (a trained teacher) to decide if it is appropriate and correct. Teacher training and CPD has a vital role to play, and AI should not be seen as a cheap alternative.

AccessArt Summary

We recognise this is just the beginning of the proposed changes, and we are ready to share our passion and expertise:

- We will continue to develop the work of AccessArt, as Subject Association for Art, helping thousands of schools develop their aspirational visual arts education offer.
- We will continue offering our expertise to Government.
- We will continue presenting our ideas at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design Education.
- We will continue to share our expertise and support others via:
 - NEU Arts & Minds Campaign
 - Museum and Gallery Task Force (CaAR)
 - CLA, Save our Subjects Campaign and beyond

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